

Till death do us part

BY CATHERINE HAGOOD
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A near-death experience can make a person truly realize what is important, especially if it could happen again easily. It took three heart attacks during college for Jory Glazener to realize that life is fleeting and can be taken away at any time. This caused him to take everything a bit more seriously and re-evaluate his previous choices in life.

"I went to college. At this point I still drew and read incessantly, but I did not study art. Under the strong influence of my parents I took on a degree that would lead me to a life of success — 'money.' Art didn't make money, so art was out. My school had a great economics and business program so I chose the degree that I felt would give me the most opportunities.

I had a wonderful time socially in school, but I took my schooling seriously. I made great grades, often scoring the highest in my class within my major. It was during this time at school that a very profound change occurred. I had three heart attacks. I underwent triple bypass surgery and discovered that I had various life-threatening blood disorders. I had always been rather unhealthy, but now my life was changed forever," says Glazener.

"Being young, though, and feeling invincible, it wasn't till later that I really felt the power of this experience. It gave me a very real sense of the brevity and beauty of life. From this moment on I felt like it could be taken from me at any time, and so I felt compelled to make the most of what I had. No boundaries and no real limits. This was a major force that still gives me a sense of urgency in whatever I'm trying to accomplish.

I began to work very, very hard at my interests. Since then I've struggled again and again with various continuances of my bad health, and the lesson seems to reintroduce itself to me again and again. At this time, still under the strong influences of my parents, my focus was being a success in business. I interned at an investment bank and did what I thought would make me attractive to a major corporate investment banker. I still drew,



"Old Generator House, Glenfin Castle, Scotland" (top) and "Self Portrait" (at left) are part of artist Jory Glazener's exhibit at Ann Long Fine Art through February.

desperately wanted to be better. Against my family's wishes, I decided that drawing had always been my deepest desires and it was all I wanted to do. After a long journey I had found the core of my interests and a study that would prove to be the most fulfilling and personally challenging. I decided to move to Asheville in the mountains of North Carolina and began drawing again every day all day."

This desire to be an artist was not a quick decision on Glazener's part. He had been an "on the side" artist his whole life. From the time he was small he learned to appreciate his mother's artistic skills, and enjoyed experimenting with art himself. In due time his mother enrolled Glazener in a local children's art class one summer. After that Glazener studied on his own, absorbing and imitating everything that he could get his hands on.

"(Glazener's mother) had wonderful books of all periods and styles. I loved them all and I began copying everything I liked, often feeling guilty for doing so. Looking back, this was the best thing I could have ever done, and it stood as a form of formal and classical training from an early age. I learned to copy images and thus train my eye for accuracy, but I envied those great artists and wished I had that 'gift' they seemed to have. I rarely drew from life, but preferred to copy or more often just draw wild and fanciful things straight from my

imagination," Glazener says.

"I was never the best draftsman in school or class. I felt so inferior and would try to befriend the kids I thought were gifted. I would often buy their drawings or sneak them so I could copy them in hopes of learning something.

"I remember a funny story in high school that illustrates my obsession. I went into a class one day and found some crumpled paper under my seat. I unraveled it and found some great little war drawings another student had made. I took them home, copied them and drew my own variations. Next day, same thing happens. I rush in the following day and the day after however, and no drawings. This went on for a year with me occasionally finding a new treasure. I even found out who he was and would often check under his desk in other classes. Crazy.

"Basically I believed you either had it or you didn't. I didn't and so I worshiped those who did. I studied every art book I could hours on end, copied genius as I saw it, but always in a position of worship. I wouldn't ever be them, but not for lack of trying."

And try Glazener did. He drew during the majority of his waking moments until he met the founder of the Fine Arts League of Asheville and master draftsman, Ben Long. Glazener was so impressed that he immediately enrolled in the school, which has only fueled his enthusiasm for drawing. "I enrolled, and that school and that man changed my life. They showed me what real drawing was all about. They taught me about a lost craft and showed me that I could learn to draw like I had previously only dreamed. Everything a person needs to develop is located at that school; it is a godsend. Over the next year and a half I drew more than I slept. I didn't engage in conversation at dinner but drew instead. Any moment I had I used it," Glazener says.

"It was at the Fine Arts League of Asheville that I learned about materials. Among other things, I learned to make ink using classical renaissance recipes and to prepare various grounds and toning methods for paper. I decided that I would not paint

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or use color until I had reached a certain level of satisfaction within my drawing. Under Ben's shadow that subjective line has been extended quite a bit. I still feel this way and am still not painting. I focus on line, value and form, what I believed to be the basic elements of powerful and time-tested imagery."

Event though Glazener is not painting yet, his skill at drawing is quite impressive. His realistic portraits and landscape imagery are reminiscent of Renaissance period artists and influenced

by the works of the old masters during that era. "I am especially drawn to the 17th century Dutch aesthetic. I love Rembrandt's pen and ink landscapes, Leonardo's beautifully intelligent solutions, and Ingress and Holbein's simplistic accuracy and revelation of form through line."

Glazener's drawings are by no means simplistic, however. His thoughtful and insightful renderings show a talent for realism and the old ways of art. His precise yet poignant artwork shows years of practice as well as an understanding for the ways of the masters.

When asked why he chose realism rather than a more contemporary style, he was very clear on his thoughts on the topic. "To me realism represents a measure of control and skill; it is a necessary means to an end. If I am inaccurate in my ability to describe something in its seen form, then any attempts at abstraction or imagination will also be bound by those same levels of inaccuracy," he says.

Glazener's work is at Ann Long Fine Art, 177 King St., through February. Hours are 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Reach the gallery, 577-0447.